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## NOTES

### TEKNONYMY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The term teknonymy is applied to the custom of naming a man after his son. It is unusual in Western Europe, where the name received at birth is rarely changed, but as a practice of primitive peoples it has long been known to anthropologists. Indeed the term is of anthropological devising, apparently invented by Tylor, the father of the craft, and duly noted in Sir James Frazer's great repertorium of anthropological data, *The Golden Bough*. But neither Frazer nor Tylor seems to have referred to the teknonymy of a civilized people, the Arabs, who have developed the system as fully as could well be done. Almost every Arab has a personal or direct name, the *ism*, and an indirect one, or surname, taken from his child, the *kunyah*. He may have a number of other names as well, derived from his tribe, his rank, a sobriquet, a common pseudonym, or a patronymic. But it is the name and *kunyah* that most closely correspond to the given, or Christian, name and the surname of Western Europe. This *kunyah* contains the *Abu*, 'father,' indispensable to all Western writers who seek to establish an oriental background for their stories, culminating in the literally preposterous 'Abou Ben Adhém' of Leigh Hunt's famous poem. As a matter of fact *kunyah* may mean 'patronymic,' but the *kunyah* that contains *Abu*, 'father of', is so much the most common that ordinarily, when the word *kunyah* is used, we think of the teknonymic system rather than the other.

The *kunyah* is the name of courtesy. No one but intimates or uninstructed would use the direct name. If a grown man has the misfortune to be childless, he is addressed as *Abu Abdullah*. In some cases the *kunyah* entirely displaces the proper name, even for men of capital importance. For example, the actual name of the first khalifa is quite unknown, even to tradition. He is simply *Abu Bakr*, 'Father of the Maiden,' that is, father of that one of Mohammed's wives who was not a widow when she married the prophet.

The origin and significance of the custom cannot be fully discussed here. Tylor and Frazer connect it, as they could hardly fail to do, with taboo and with marriage institutions. Doubtless a name-taboo of some sort is at the bottom of it. But the Arabs have a conscious, and, it must be confessed, absurdly simple rationale for it.

They assume that the *kunyah* is a mark of honor designed to indicate a man's social affiliation, whereby he is addressed as the head of a house and the founder of a family; all this is implied in *Abu*.

It may be noted at this point that most of the instances of teknonymy which Tylor and Frazer actually give are from Africa and Asia, and from points very close to, or quite within, regions of Mohammedan influence. While wishing to give full weight to the persistency of local customs in names, I do not think the possibility of influence from neighboring Arabic-speaking (or partially Arabic-speaking) centres has been sufficiently taken into account.<sup>1</sup>

Sporadic instances of something like teknonymy occur in places where it certainly did not prevail as a custom. So on two occasions in the Iliad (ii, 260; iv, 354) Odysseus refers to himself as "Father of Telemachus." However, this may have been a personal whimsey of the most personal and whimsical of heroes.

Teknonymy is distinctly an Arab and not a general Semitic custom. Babylonian and Aramaic names are for the most part composite names of various origin; frequently enough they are patronymics, but, except perhaps in Ethiopic, a *kunyah* in the restricted sense does not occur, certainly is not a regular portion of the name.

Now in the Old Testament the names are in general made on the Babylonian system. Patronymics are frequent and most names are theophorous, — as are also most Egyptian names. In a country lying, as Palestine does, directly between the Egyptian and Mesopotamian culture-areas, this is to be expected. But Palestine, continuous as was the development of its civilization, frequently suffered in historic times from invasions of Bedouin. The Old Testament is the literature of a group which professed to be descended from one of the more recent waves of Bedouin invaders. The modern counterparts of the Bedouin have an elaborate teknonymy, which goes through their entire literature as far as we can trace it. I wish in the present paper to suggest that we may find traces of teknonymy among those older Arabs, or quasi-arabs, whom we call Hebrews.

The thirtieth chapter of Proverbs contains "the words of Agur b. Yakeh." The collection in its present form is later than the rest of Proverbs, and has no internal bond with anything that goes before or after it. Agur speaks of the limitation of man's knowledge on mat-

<sup>1</sup> In Steinmetz's *Ethnologische Studien zur ersten Entwicklung der Strafe*, II, 223 seq. 'Teknonomie' is fully discussed, and, as might be supposed, brought into connection with the matriarchate. The presence of teknonymy among the Arabs is adverted to, but is treated as though it were a local custom in a restricted part of Syria.

ters concerning God. "Who hath ascended up into heaven or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? . . . What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou knowest?" מַה שְׁמוֹ וּמַה שֵׁם בְּנֵי. This is generally taken to be an announcement of the inscrutability of God, somewhat parallel to the Yahveh speeches in Job. Whether that is so or not — and the meaning that would be first suggested is, I think, a very different one — the ordinary interpretation of the passage as it appears in current commentaries is unsatisfactory. If, however, the *kunyah* was known to the Hebrews, the passage at once becomes intelligible. It is as though Agur asked, 'What is his name and surname?' If he is speaking of God, his tone is that of stern mockery of those who might profess to know the unknowable. If he is simply asserting that an individual who could really know the structure of the world must have direct acquaintance with all its phenomena, he ends by asking, 'Is there such a person? If you know him, pray give me his full name.'

Who is this Agur? The text immediately after his name contains a word which might be a place-name, Massa, and if so, Agur comes from the southern desert, Edom, and is not a Canaanite but a tribesman of the desert. That he is famous for wisdom is in keeping with the traditional repute of Edomites: Job came from Uz, and Teman was thick with wise men. The name Agur does not occur elsewhere in the Bible. It has a foreign ring.

Those who first wrote and read the collection of Agur understood the words, I think, in the way I have suggested. That might simply mean that they knew that the Edomites had such a custom, just as we know the Arabs have it. But we may remember that by a persistent tradition Edom — although in fact hostile — was a close kinsman of Israel, while the Canaanites among whom Israel lived and whose culture it absorbed were by an equally strong tradition originally utter aliens. Can we find, in records that Israelites regarded as indubitably theirs, traces of the practice we are considering?

In the story of Noah in Genesis 9, 18 the statement is made, "And the sons of Noah that went forth from the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Ham is the father of Canaan." And in verse 22 of the same chapter, Ham is again called 'Father of Canaan' אָבִי כְנַעַן. The passage is a part of the Yahvist document, the oldest of the component parts of the hexateuch, and contains fragments of a still older poem cursing Canaan. The usual explanation is that the older tradition gave the names of the three sons of Noah as Shem, Japheth,

and Canaan, and that a reviser inserted 'Ham the father of' before the name of Canaan in order to harmonize this tradition with the other according to which the three sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. That certainly is possible. But we do not know in its entirety the poem quoted, and the hypothesis of a reviser to make this insertion is unnecessary if we assume that in legends or ballads known to the Yahvist the ancient patriarch appeared with name and surname, *ism* and *kunyah*, Ham Abi C'naan.

Again in Genesis 11, 29 — a Yahvist passage — Abraham's niece and sister-in-law is called "Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah." Iscah is unknown elsewhere, but Milcah is frequently mentioned and seems to be the eponymous mother of an important clan or tribe. What shall be said of such a phrase as "Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah," unless Father-of-Milcah (*Abi Milcah*) was practically Haran's surname, his *kunyah*? This would be in complete accordance with Arabic custom, where such an expression as Ismail ibn Abu-Ismail, is of frequent occurrence, although in it the actual name of Ismail's father is not mentioned at all.

So, too, in Genesis 30, 19 and 34, 6 the Canaanite prince referred to is called *Hamor Abi Sh'chem*, Hamor the father of Shechem. That same expression occurs in Judges 9, 28, in what is very likely a fragment of an old ballad or epic.

There are other cases which might be cited, *Kemuel Abi Aram* in Genesis 22, 21, *Arba Abi Anak*, Joshua 15, 13, *Machir Abi Gilead*, Joshua 17, 1; 1 Chronicles 2, 21-23. In 1 Samuel 14, 51 we have an expression like an Arabic name with a double *kunyah*, a very common case, *Ner Abi Abner ben Abiel* — the *Abi kunyah*, we may notice, coming first, as it would in Arabic.

Now the ordinary use of the *kunyah* in Arabic is not merely to denote physical paternity. It is the source of nicknames, both jocular and respectful. A man may be called 'Father of spectacles,' 'Father of strength,' 'Father of cunning.' More rarely 'Mother,' 'Sister,' or 'Brother' may be so used. Animals may be similarly honored. Indeed 'father of ravening' is a constant name for the lion, 'father of Job' (i.e. 'patience') for the camel. These terms of relationship mean merely that the particular quality is possessed in a striking degree by the person or animal mentioned. And this is not a late development but apparently is as old as anything we have of Arabic literature. In Hebrew there are a great many names of the form Abitub, Abimelech, Abiezer, Achitub, Achimelech, etc. The parts *Abi-* and

*Achi*-, 'father' and 'brother,' are most frequently taken to be the divine element of a theophorous compound — a substitute for *El*- or *Jeho*- or *Baal*-, and many suggestions have been offered as to who the god is that hides behind the innocuous appellation of Father or Brother. That, of course, implies that these names are a survival of a pre-yahvist period of Israelitish history. In some or all of these cases the explanation may be sound, although the designation of a god as 'brother' is, to say the least, difficult to parallel elsewhere. Secondly, while the *Abi* and *Achi* series show many correspondences, there are few cases in which an *Abi*-name appears in another form with *El*- or *Jeho*- in the place of *Abi*-, as *Abinadab* by the side of *Jehonadab*, and *Abiezer* parallel to *Eliezer*. In many of the names of this composition the second part is a quality or an action — help, strength, goodness. If in these names *Abi*- represents the Arabic type mentioned, as *Abu Thaqif*, *Abu Jamil*, and the like, we may find another case of the presence of a *kunyah*. Abigail and Abishag, which are names of women, will be hard to put into such a group, but there is nothing to hinder us from supposing that this type was derived from two sources — one the theophorous name and the other the *kunyah*.

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## AN UNKNOWN SOURCE OF LUTHER'S THEOLOGY

In his article 'A Decade of Luther Study' (*Harvard Theological Review* for April 1921, p. 111), Preserved Smith says of A. V. Müller: "His own thesis, doubtless carried too far, is that everything in Luther can be found in his predecessors, and that there is practically nothing original at all in the Reformer's thought."

In two articles, to which Preserved Smith does not refer, Müller has collected concrete evidence in support of his view.<sup>1</sup> He there compares the theology of two members of Luther's order (the Augustinian) with that of Luther, showing that there is a perfect agreement on many important points between Agostino Favaroni and Jacobus Perez on the one hand, and Luther on the other.

But even more telling is the evidence brought in Müller's recent book,<sup>2</sup> in which we become acquainted with a nearly forgotten master

<sup>1</sup> *Bilychnis*, Rome, June 1914 and May-June 1920.

<sup>2</sup> A. V. Müller, *Una fonte ignota del sistema di Lutero (il beato Fidati da Cascia e la sua teologia)*. Rome, 1921.